DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 395 342 CS 509 252

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TITLE (En)visioning Success: The Anatomy and Functions of Vision in the Basic Course.
PUB DATE Nov 95
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (81st, San Antonio, TX, November 18-21, 1995).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Course Objectives; Departments; Graduate Students; Group Dynamics; Higher Education; *Introductory Courses; Leadership; *Speech Communication; *Staff Development
IDENTIFIERS Borgmann (Ernest); *Faculty Attitudes; *Visioning

ABSTRACT

The success of the basic course in speech communication depends largely on a vision that values the course and its place in the undergraduate curriculum; emphasizes the necessity of ongoing training and development of teaching assistants and instructors; and values scholarship that will enhance those efforts as well as improve dedication. Vision also acquaints outsiders with the group and its endeavors in a manner likely to foster appreciation and support. Contemporary studies in communication and rhetorical theory illuminate the dynamics of "visioning." Most notably, Ernest G. Bormann provides insight into what compromises a vision and how it comes into being. After more than two decades of study, Bormann continues to posit that visioning is a process in which the elements of a vision, articulated by various individuals, will "catch on and chain out." A vision illuminates what is being done well, what needs to be done better, and what remains to be done. The effectiveness and efficiency of the basic course depends, in large measure, on a vision for the course and for the staff--a commonly shared mindset pertaining to what the group is about and where it is going. Vision can be represented in the training program for graduate students, as well as in the bearing and personality of the program's director. A vision surfaces in the group's words and deeds as they continually define and redefine their purpose. (Contains 45 references.) (TB)

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Running head: VISION IN THE BASIC COURSE

[En]visioning Success: The Anatomy and Functions of Vision in the Basic Course

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[EN]VISIONING SUCCESS: THE ANATOMY AND FUNCTIONS OF VISION IN THE BASIC COURSE

Abstract

The success of the basic course depends largely upon a vision that values the course and its place in the undergraduate curriculum, emphasizes the necessity of ongoing training and development of teaching assistants and other intructors, and that values the scholarship that will enhance those efforts as well as improve instruction. The vision and the process of visioning helps to forge group consciousness and dedication, and it helps to clarify tasks, enabling peak performance. The vision also aquaints outsiders with the group and its endeavors in a manner likely to foster appreciation and support.

[En]visioning success: the anatomy and functions of vision in the basic course

When our curriculum and pedagogy came under fire from one in our discipline (Michael Burgoon) who insisted upon "divorcing dame speech" (1989, p. 303), Rod Hart (1993) answered with a written version of a keynote he had delivered to the Western States' Convention, proclaiming our endeavors "the ultimate people-making discipline" (p. 101). Hart championed our offerings, noting that "those who teach interpersonal communication . . . teach that lovers can better love and families can become more familiar if they are sensitive to what they say. Those who teach public address and media studies teach that social power can be shifted and public visions exalted if people learn to think well and speak well. Those who teach performance studies teach that even the most cold-blooded text can be thawed out by the warmth of a human voice" (p. 102) With regard to public speaking, Hart emphasized that such instruction was vital to our political well-being, empowering us to influence others as well as to equip us with "the mental agility to listen between others' lines when they speak and to remember her or his own bottom line when responding to them" (p. 103). Hart's own bottom line: "Communication will be the most important subject taught in the latter part of the twentieth century" (p. 101).

Jo Sprague (1993) also answered Michael Burgoon's diatribe, particularly his claims that "theory and research in communication" had "far outstripped what is presently being taught in speech," and that "[the typical teacher of] SPEECH does not embrace . . . a commitment to scholarship" and, moreover, exhibits "active resistance" to the scholarship that would inform instructional efforts (1989, p. 303). Sprague acknowledged the "gap between our theory and pedagogy," noting that Burgoon was not the first to call it to our attention (p. 109). Sprague also noted that the problem (in part) centered upon communication education having been marginalized, constituting an instance of what Ernest

Boyer (1991a) critiqued as the misguided and unethical practice within higher education to privilege "one kind of scholarship over all other forms" (p. 109).

Sprague offered a corrective: "To reunite theory and pedagogy requires that virtually every member of the discipline consider communication education as a second or third area of professional commitment." She envisioned the results: "How enriched both our teaching and theorizing would be if all scholars agreed to contribute to the literature of this area from time to time, to read it often and to respond to it critically as they would to work in their own areas of specialization, and regularly to engage in intellectual discussions of teaching with their own colleagues and graduate students" (p. 114). In the final pages of the article, Sprague paves the way for such a discussion by noting a few ways in which our "pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge" could better reflect "the content knowledge of our discipline" (p. 115).

Both Hart and Sprague provide elements of a vision that values speech and that effectively answers concerns such as those importuned by Michael Burgoon and challenge his competing vision of speech as a "dame" whom scholars of communication should abandon. Hart eloquently reminds teachers of the basic course of their value and their mission. Sprague perceptively notes our trials but impresses upon us our responsibility, and she reminds the academic community, in general, of its accountability. Sprague envisions how good we, as a united discipline, can perform.

The exchange between these authors not only illustrates competing visions but also illuminates the various interconnected dimensions of the vision within which the director of the basic course must operate. The view of the course constitutes but one component; at least two other components exist. Directors also operate within a mind-set concerning the training and development of staff as well as within a view of pedagogical research. The director must attend to each of these components while attempting to orchestrate a healthy vision for the course. The overall goal is to facilitate a vision that training and development

of the staff facilitates their professional growth and enables quality instruction and that effective training and development depends on scholarship that will inform those efforts.

Prior to discussing a fruitful vision for the basic course, however, this paper first explores the anatomy of a vision--its genesis and its makeup. Next, it probes the functions of vision, illuminating its power. Finally, the paper suggests a vision for the basic course, noting the good it can engender. Clearly, a healthy vision is central to the success of the basic course, and the success of the course can enhance the standing of the field.

The Anatomy of a Vision

Scholars in speech communication who have contemplated "vision" and what it means naturally gravitate toward studies of management and leadership--which long have explored to the role of vision in leadership. While explicating the role of vision in a rhetorical analysis of the 1992 presidential campaign, for example, Ronald F. Wendt and Gail T. Fairhurst (1994) employ models of charisma advanced in studies of organizational leadership to examine contemporary political leadership. These authors define vision as the "management of meaning" and explain that "to manage meaning about future directions is also to create a set of expectations for behavior or action to follow" (p. 181). In scholarship pertaining to directing the basic course, Shelley Schaefer Hinck and Nancy L. Buerkel-Rothfuss (1993) likewise utilize a definition from leadership studies which describes vision as a "'mental image of a possible and desired future state" (p. 124). The authors specify that once the director of the basic course has "identified her [or his] vision of the basic course," the director should then "set out to persuade the department faculty" that the vision is "a viable alternative to the old method" (p. 127).

These ideations are common to the scholarship pertaining to leadership. In a much-cited book on the subject, Burt Nanus (1992, p. 8) identifies vision as an "articulation of a destination toward which your organization should aim, a future that in important ways is better, more successful, or more desirable for your organization than is present." In this manner, Nanus notes, the articulated vision offers a "realistic, credible, attractive future"

which is "so energizing" that it "in effect jump-starts the future by calling forth the skills, talents, and resources to make it happen" (p. 8). Leaders whose effectiveness springs from offering an effective, compelling vision are identified as transformational leaders (Barge, 1994).

The predominant conception of vision as a compelling image articulated by a leader reflects traditional philosophies of rhetoric. For example, Aristotle (n.d./1991) taught that the speaker could motivate others by articulating images. He emphasized that the speaker would have to attend carefully to word choice, noting that "one word is more proper . . . to making the thing appear 'before the eyes'" (p. 225). Longinus (n.d./1957) also emphasized the power of words to capture the imagination, noting that if selected "brilliantly," language "almost stamps upon the words the very shape" (19) of that which it was describing, thus allowing the audience to "see it" (p. 23-24) Longinus qualified that the images would need to be grounded in "actuality" and "probability" (p. 26). Cicero (n.d./1942) echoed Longinus, almost verbatim, noting that the "brilliant style" (p. 327) would make an audience feel that they had "actually" seen what was described. Francis Bacon (1605/1990) reflected these earlier views when he specified that rhetoric was "to apply Reason to Imagination for the better moving of the will" (p. 629). Bacon's definition implies that giving ideas vividness would move an audience by the apparent concreteness. George Campbell (1776/1963) held a similar view, writing that "great and noble images, which when in suitable colouring presented to the mind, do, as it were, distend the imagination with some vast conception, and quite ravish the soul" (p. 3). Campbell believed that vivacity, or the liveliness of ideas, was central to capturing attention, exciting passion, and compelling belief. Like Longinus, Cicero, and Bacon, Campbell was careful to instruct that the images presented would need to bear a "semblance of truth" (p. 33).

The Process of Visioning

Studies of leadership and traditional conceptions of rhetoric provide but a partial understanding of vision. Although these studies illuminate the power of language to

capture imagination, they oversimplify the process of visioning. These conceptions employ a linear model of communication when describing vision as originating with the leader who is able to articulate the vision in a manner that compels support (e.g., Conger, 1989; Fritz, 1986; Garner, 1989; Nanus, 1992). A few authors seem to employ a transactional model of communication (see Barnlund, 1970), implying that a vision is somewhat of a collaboration between leader and subordinates, but they fall short of explaining the process (e.g., Tichy & Devanna, 1986, p. 140; Jaffe, Scott, & Orioli, 1986, p. 97). Certainly, the leader's voice is an important voice, but the leader is not the sole author of a vision. Visioning is an intersubjective phenomenon; people do not merely buy into a vision but take a more active role in its genesis and evolution. This process is akin to that Kenneth Burke (1941/1973) explained which transpires with the reading of a poem: "The reader, in participating in the poem, breathes into this anatomic structure a new physiological vitality" (p. 90).

Contemporary studies in communication and rhetorical theory illuminate the dynamics of visioning. Most notably, Ernest G. Bormann provides insight into what comprises a vision and how it comes into being. After more than two decades of study, Bormann (1972, 1982, 1985, 1986, et. al. 1994, 1995) continues to posit that visioning is a process in which the elements of a vision, articulated by various individuals, will "catch on and chain out" (1972, p. 398) and culminate into an overall vision. Bormann explains that within this process a group will recount positive and negative elements in their history in order to identify an ideal, yet attainable future. Some accounts will be "ignored," but others will "cause a greater or lesser symbolic explosion in the form of a chain reaction" (1995, p. 269).

Although visioning is a group process, leadership remains important. The leader, after all, likely is formally empowered. How she or he employs that power assumes increased importance. Visioning would seem to benefit from participative leadership, a style of leadership where the leader shares power by actively involving subordinates in identifying

problems, formulating solutions, making decisions, and by allowing individual freedom and access to information (Bass, 1990). Leaders can facilitate participation by employing communication that "promotes, sustains, and extends inquiry" (Salazar, 1995, p. 187). This communication can occur formally in meetings and informally through "small talk" (see Duck & Pond, 1989; Duck 1990). Ideally, the leader is adept at visioning both with words and deeds which serves to model, encourage, and inspire others to think critically and creatively and to share their ideas. As Hinck and Buerkel-Rothfuss (1993) note, it will be the task of the director to "coordinate a variety of perspectives" (117) into a "shared vision" of the course, and doing so will allow the course to be run more effectively and efficiently.

Traditional theories of rhetoric suggest that the reception of an idea will depend on eloquence and vividness, as well as whether the idea is plausible. In other words, each element within a vision must be both realistic and compelling. Contemporary theories of rhetoric also direct any who would contribute to the vision to present the idea vividly in conjunction with solid evidence and reasoning. Chaim Perelman (1982), for example, in discussing "presence," noted the power of a rhetor's language to "evoke" (p. 35) certain images in the mind of an audience which could affect both thought and disposition. Alan Monroe (1935) applied psychological studies of human motivation to the structure of a speech, noting that motivation depended, in part, upon visualization. Both traditional and contemporary theories of rhetoric, then, suggest that the course director, as well as anyone who aspires to lead, can make their ideas more appealing if they provide adequate support, sound reasoning, and if they express those ideas with a visual quality.

Visioning is an ongoing and recursive process. Visioning involves reflecting upon information and sharing and building ideas. The vision will continue to evolve as ideas are tested and as new ideas emerge, take shape, and gain consideration, and as the staff meets the challenges posed by external forces, such as the administration, technology, or demographics.

In sum, traditional and contemporary theories of rhetoric, coupled with studies of leadership, yield a fuller understanding of a vision and the process of visioning. Traditional accounts emphasize the role of language but limit the vision to one source. Studies in leadership likewise typically present a linear model. Clearly, the director must be proactive in crafting a vision. At the same time, though, contemporary theories of rhetoric suggest that ultimately a vision is authored by multiple voices and, hence, any formally designated leader should employ a participative style of leadership so to promote the process of visioning. Any member potentially can contribute an idea that will "catch on." An idea that is stated eloquently, persuasively, and vividly will gain better consideration.

The Makeup of a Vision

Bormann affords us a more accurate definition of vision, though his explanation may require some revision. Bormann (1995) restricts messages within this process to "somewhere and/or sometime other than the here-and-now" (269). In contrast, Aristotle (n.d./1991) taught that what is envisioned "should be seen as being done rather than as in the future" (245). Burke (1969b) echoes Aristotle when he observes that people influence others chiefly by identifying their "ways" (p. 55) with another, communicating similar images, attitudes, and ideas. Taken together, these views provide a broader understanding; vision is not bound by time but addresses both the past and future as well as the here-and-now.

Hence, much of what may be a compelling vision addresses what the group is about and are doing, not merely what they have done or where they are going. A vision illuminates what is being done well, what needs to be done better, and what remains to be done. In other words, vision is not just for a future but for a state of being: what one should enact, i.e., attempt to "be" now. For example, with regard to the basic course, a statement pertaining to the here-and-now might be: "We're professionals providing quality exposure and experience in a course that is central to students' education."

The vision addresses not only the group but also the individual member. In terms of the individual, the vision could suggest the aspiration to be a good teacher, an active, contributing member of the staff, a good citizen in the department, and a scholar who enjoys the respect of students and colleagues, alike. Vision, then, pertains to past, present, and future, and it also pertains to the group as a whole, as well as the individual member.

The Functions of a Vision

The panoramic content of a vision illuminates its functions and its potential. Brown's (1990) discussion of the roles stories play in an organizational setting provides an analogue to the functions of a vision. A vision's constituent parts, like stories, clarify and familiarize. They promote bonding, inclusion, and identification that engenders group consciousness. They also empower, motivate, and provide direction, helping the group to excel. Although the functions of stories are roughly analogous to the functions of a vision, some noteworthy differences also exist. This section explores both.

Group consciousness

As Bormann (1972) notes, a vision will "serve to sustain the members' sense of community" (398). The participative style of leadership inherent to the process of visioning will engender group consciousness. Leadership becomes "distributed leadership" (Huey, 1994, p. 42), with each member of the group expected to contribute to the enterprise and to own responsibility. As noted in studies of transformational leadership, such inclusion and participation should strengthen the cohesiveness of the group (Barge, 1994, pp. 55-56). In addition, since members participate in the process they are likely better able to explain, elaborate upon, and justify the vision. Furthermore, studies in leadership reveal that active involvement can enhance understanding, motivate compliance, and bolster morale (Hersey & Stinson, 1980).

To foster participation, the director will need to promote the success of every individual on the staff, show them respect and trust, and help them learn and grow so that they can achieve what is envisioned (Nanus, 1992, p. 15). The director will need to provide more

assistance for those with less experience and less confidence (Williams, 1995.) At the same time, each person, newcomers and veterans alike, will need to sense that he or she is part of the team and can make valuable contributions that will help the group excel.

A unique and positive identity for the group can set it apart, projecting an image, for example, of active professionals operating on the cutting edge. Concurrently, this distinction of uniqueness may function to associate the group with other top performers in the field. Such an identity can instill a healthy pride and sense of responsibility that will motivate performance. (Nanus, 1992, p. 49).

Group consciousness should extend beyond the instructors of the course. A director likely will benefit from inviting the participation of the department. Devising a vision with the department participating in its creation will allow the department as a whole to be more familiar with the operation of the course, its high goals, and the dedication of the director to achieve those high goals. Their involvement will assure them that the director welcomes their participation in refining the course and mentoring the staff. Likewise, the staff will feel more valuable and included; they will be able to view themselves as an integral part of the department's mission. Inclusion may be especially helpful for adjunct faculty who may feel isolated (Arden, 1995).

On track for excellence

In addition to group consciousness and collegiality, a vision helps a group to excel. A vision allows the group to identify its mission(s) and the goals involved and to begin to devise and execute strategies for accomplishing specific goals (Nanus, 1992, p. 54) . As goals and strategies are identified, ambiguity decreases, allowing the "abilities" and "skills" (Salazar, 1995, p. 179) of a group's members to come more fully into play. Equipped with such a keen sense of direction, the group may surprise even itself with a more than optimum performance (Salazar, 1995).

As such, the vision and its various components enable participants to perform well and with the confidence that they are contributing significantly to the enterprise and that their

contributions will be recognized and appreciated (See Nanus, p. 17-19). This sense of accomplishment is both satisfying and motivational. In this manner, the vision will "impel" group members "strongly to action" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398).

The process of visioning not only provides initial direction but it also provides redirection when needed. As Nanus observes: "Vision plays an important role not only in the start-up phase of an organization but throughout the organization's entire life cycle" (Nanus, 1992, p. 9). Visioning becomes an ongoing public forum where participants air their concerns and voice their views and ideas. They are actively involved and "colleagues" in the truest sense of the word, helping to define the principles, standards and values which will direct specific behaviors and overall performance. Ideally, the vision will constantly undergo scrutiny and examination, with the staff actively involved. When fundamental change is needed, visioning is the process for establishing a new direction or a transformation (p. 9).

Public Relations Function

Whereas stories often are exchanged internally and thus are insulated from the outside (Brown, 1985, p. 179), a vision may be very visible--and desirably so. As Nanus (1992) observes, a vision's power is "its ability to grab the attention of those both inside and outside the organization" (p. 16). The group is a rhetorical community whose discourse gets noticed for its eloquent, compelling ideas and the vivid images as to who they are, what they are about, and where they are going. Just as a vision provides clarity for its members it can function likewise for outsiders.

The vision can enhance the integrity of the course as well as the reputation of the department. The vision should be discernible in the course description and the stated goals of the course, apparent to students and to anyone who would peruse the syllabus. Members of the university community--administrators as well as other departments--who become aware of the goals of the course should appreciate the commitment to education that it displays. In addition, the vision likely will motivate student appreciation and

performance. Granted, students still may not derive great pleasure or excitement from assignments or grading criteria, but it is more likely that they will "take them seriously, find them meaningful and worthwhile, and try to get the intended benefit from them" (Brophy, 1983, p. 200). Upon completion of the course, the vision that has been imparted should provide students with a sense of closure as well as enable them to better assess what they have gained.

In sum, a vision is story-like in function, but whereas a story is specific to a single value or strategy or some other aspect, a vision offers an all-encompassing view of the enterprise. It provides a context for interpreting stories and any other information, and it also provides a link back to the whole. The vision functions, as do stories, to provide proof of the group's uniqueness and the value of its contribution (Brown, 1985, p. 178), but it functions in this manner not just internally for the group but also externally to other audiences. In this manner, the vision provides structure, and it also functions in a public relations capacity. Given its pervasiveness, it is little wonder that Nanus views the vision as central to success, contending: "When it comes to leading an organization, there is nothing so necessary as the right vision, widely shared" (p. 22).

Orchestrating a Healthy Vision

As one takes on the role of course director, he or she inherits a vision for the course, whether it be deliberate or latent/unimagined, productive or counterproductive, fuzzy or well-defined. As the director works to influence an "improved" vision, he or she can utilize the eloquence and credibility of others to present various, potentially attractive ideas. A survey of others' visions (as shown in the introduction to this paper) can provide invaluable insight. As Bormann et. al. (1994) note, "a rhetorical vision can be artistically stitched together from several strong but competing visions" (p. 277). Many of the best ideas, though, likely will come from within as the group contemplates its specific program and its particular opportunities and constraints. In addition to ongoing dialogue, a steady

survey of relevant literature and regular interaction with other, interested colleagues likely will supply new ideas that a group may incorporate into their vision.

Since a vision is multi-faceted, the group will contemplate a number of elements. At minimum, a vision for the basic course includes images of the group, the director, and the individual member of the staff, as well as images of the course, and images of what will assist the group's endeavors and bolster their performance. The vision also features a nonverbal component: an incarnation of what is envisioned.

Images of Those Involved

As noted, identity of the group and the individual comprises one element within a vision. Identity would constitute what Burke (1969a) terms "agent," to designate who performs the act and what kind of person or people they are. Attributes for those involved might include "professional," "ambitious," and "interdependent." "Professional" suggests that the member/group meets responsibilities competently and in a manner that is fair, courteous, and often exceeding the call of duty. "Ambitious" suggests a commitment to excellence and to ongoing development. "Interdependency" emphasizes the importance of teamwork and cooperation (see Covey, 1989, p. 50). The individual will have accountability to the group that he or she will contribute actively and will safeguard the integrity of the enterprise.

Interdependency has implications for the director, suggesting that the director will involve the staff actively in a diagnosis of the course and decisions pertaining to curriculum, policy, and design. In addition to conferring with the staff to gain their assessment, interdependency suggests that the director will survey the relevant literature regarding curriculum and methods of instruction and also will enlist the expertise of colleagues outside of the group, emphasizing to them the desirability of their involvement.

The concept of interdependency prompts the director and others who wish to influence to actively seek out information that will yield well-grounded ideas. A vision, as Nanus notes, is a realistic dream, "built upon information and knowledge" (p. 34). In the process

of visioning (as discussed above), an informed voice likely will be better able to influence perceptions and attitudes about the course as well as to successfully advocate items for the agenda or to successfully advocate a particular action or policy. Furthermore, by soliciting input the director will spark the process of visioning by actively involving others and encouraging their participation.

Images of the Course

Images of the course are akin to what Burke (1969a) labels "act," referring to what takes place. This aspect of the vision might include what is done for the student in the course, what is done for the instructor of the course, and what is done for the department, the institution, and society. Images of the course would also include what Burke identifies as "purpose," that is, explanations as to why the act is performed.

At the center of the vision resides notions about the course: the course must be valued. The group can articulate its value and contribution to the curriculum, perhaps supplementing their descriptions with the eloquence of others. They can nurture a positive image for the course by stressing its merit as well as expressing a commitment to providing a quality experience for the students.

In crafting a vision, the group will be constrained by the department's notions of the course and--as with any rhetor--must operate within those constraints as well as recognize the opportunities. For example, the department ideally values the course and its place in the curriculum. Ideally, too, the department recognizes its visibility on campus and has concerns for its integrity. Such factors suggest a vision of the course as important and making a solid contribution that others will appreciate. These notions would provide opportunities for the director to suggest changes that would align more closely with the vision. If this alignment was not immediately obvious, the director would have to explain the fit. If the existent vision is less than ideal or short-sighted and, as a result, provides little opportunity to suggest change, the director will have to negotiate modifications to the

vision by offering up a fresh, compelling view with which others can agree, appreciate, and assist in developing (Conger, 1989).

The vision can encourage a healthy perspective for undergraduate students and their education. Sprague and Nyquist (1991) have observed that the "most effective teachers are highly engaged with their students as individuals and are emotionally involved in their success or failures." These instructors have "internalized the notion of 'client' and will talk about students in terms of student needs and the impact of instruction." To engage this perspective the instructor will "transcend or set aside their own ego needs and defensiveness" (p. 309). These instructors recognize each student as unique and deserving of good faith, optimism, and high expectations.

The vision could also impart how teaching the basic course is valuable to graduate students. In this view teaching does not detract from a TA's study but is an arena for growth. Teaching the course will sharpen and test their own command of the concepts they encounter in their studies. They will be developing a deeper understanding of those individual concepts as well as how they fit into a larger scheme and manifest themselves in common experience. With this advanced understanding will come a greater ability to converse with other scholars in the field as well as relate this knowledge to the layperson--something the teacher must be able to do. As Nyquist and Sprague (1992) have explained, the "postsocialized" scholar is "able to translate and communicate even the most specialized knowledge to others outside the field and make complex concepts clear to learners new to the discipline" (p. 109).

The director could challenge the staff to envision how teaching the course can complement their studies as well as equip them for success. For example, they will have experience to enter on their vita as well as the opportunity to establish a solid track record that will enable their supervisor to write a solid recommendation that points to specific, desirable qualities they have developed, their success as an instructor, and the various contributions they have made.

As Nanus observes, the "right vision attracts commitment and energizes people. People seem to need and want something they can commit to, a significant challenge worthy of their best efforts" (1992, p. 16). In the case of TAs, they already are challenged by graduate school and have a vision of success. The vision of the basic course can be a part of that same vision. It must be shown to fit into the overall scheme of their education and development. Those skills and experiences will transfer to other contexts (e.g., leadership) and will comprise an important part of their record.

For adjuncts and other instructors, the course must challenge them as well. The challenge could be to continuously build a better course and one that will be more efficient for all involved. They must know that their ideas and experiences are needed and valued and will help to build a better course. They must see that they are a part of something "big" and very worthwhile.

A new perspective may also be in order for junior and senior faculty in the department. The "bread and butter" metaphor that has long-ruled many departments is not the most healthy conception. A more productive view is that the basic course is a place where ideas are tested and where the next generation of scholars receive an introduction to the field (as undergraduates) and gain competence (as graduates). In this manner, departments could envision the basic course as a laboratory for testing theories and ideas, and as a place that could benefit from the expertise, insight, and involvement of all of the faculty.

Images of What Will Assist

Images of what will assist the staff involves what Burke (1969a) describes as the "scene," pertaining to the context, and "agency," referring to what means and methods are conducive to success. In terms of the scene, a context that promotes success is one in which training and ongoing development is appreciated, supported, & valued. Departmental support is essential for success. In a study of training programs for TAs; Susan Ambrose (1991) found that ineffective programs exhibited "two clearly recognizable problems" (p. 166), both of which involved apparent apathy by the faculty.

In order to facilitate healthy notions regarding training within the overall vision for the basic course, the director may need to be proactive, acquainting colleagues with the theory and scholarship that points to the necessity of ongoing training, its various components, and its demands. The director might emphasize the value of ongoing training--how it assists mastery, confidence and professionalism and how it helps TAs to discern their value and how it instills an enduring commitment to ongoing development. The director might also note how providing a context for a continuing dialogue can improve performance as well as relations. Perhaps most compelling, though, are the findings that, when surveyed, teaching assistants recognized the need and benefits of training and requested such support (see Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray, 1990 ; also see Kaufman-Everett & Backlund, 1981).

Clearly, the department that values the course will likely be more prone to support efforts to improve instruction; the relationship is obvious. Less obvious is what comprises an effective regimen for training and development. In other words, what means, methods, and conditions foster success?

A successful regimen employs both formal and informal means. For example, departments often provide a formal orientation for incoming TAs to help them assume their roles with a higher degree of competence and confidence. Many programs have found that a follow-up class for new TAs makes it realistic to assign reading and assignments that will facilitate reflection. Current practices are many and varied (see Lambert & Tice, 1993); the director has to work within the constraints and opportunities present in the department and at the institution. Some programs might allow a one hour class whereas others support a three hour class. The class might be confined to the first semester, or it might span two or more. Other departments creatively devise an unofficial class if they face constraints that prohibit or make problematic an official offering. Whatever the director is able to do, he or she might promote departmental involvement and support by having the department head or curriculum committee to critique a proposed syllabus. Once the syllabus has been constructed, the director might circulate it for all to see.

In addition to orientation and a class for new TAs, other formal means of training typically pursued include observations of teaching and a follow-up conference with the instructor as well as meetings with the entire staff to diagnose the current state of affairs (see Andrews, 1983). Informal means often entail such practices as "small talk" (described above), an "open door" policy, and social gatherings to promote groupness and collegiality.

In order to devise a successful context for training and development, directors may have to articulate the obvious: a successful regimen must be informed. The director can underscore the importance of scholarship and how it is integral to success as a director. The director can emphasize that just as any professor can enhance instruction via researching and writing, so can the course director improve his or her knowledge and expertise. Part of the vision, then, for the basic course includes a statement pertaining to the director's own need to be informed so that she or he can perform well and can assist the performance of others. Furthermore, as an active scholar the director can help inform others similarly engaged, making a valuable contribution to the discipline and perhaps even to interdisciplinary efforts to improve TA training and development. To do so requires the support and encouragement of the department and the institution with the understanding that they will recognize those endeavors as scholarly. This type of evaluation would constitute a return to a paradigm of scholarship that includes pedagogical research, a move that Boyer (1991a) has urged. The academy might also recognize that quality textbooks and responsible reviews likewise are vital to the health and reputation of a field, not only for educating the masses and acquainting them with the merits of a discipline, but also for providing a solid foundation for those who will pursue graduate study.

A Voice and Embodiment

To negotiate and perpetuate a healthy vision, the director (and others within the rhetorical community) must personify the vision (Conger, 1989). Traditional wisdom tells us that "talk is cheap" and "actions speak louder than words." What we know intuitively is

borne out in studies; generally speaking, people do rely more frequently on nonverbal codes than on verbal messages (Burgoon, J., 1985, pp. 346-47). Hence the director must be one of deeds as well as words. The director "passionately 'lives the vision'" (Nanus, 1992, p. 14) and works diligently to establish a knowledge base that will inform efforts to ever-build a better course and one that incorporates and reflects the latest findings regarding the subject, methods of instruction, and ways to train and nurture the development of staff.

The director might personify a vision through research, perhaps contributing to the literature to enhance collective understanding. The director's example likely will engender the respect of students, staff, and department, and it should make more compelling the vision the director would put forward. Similarly, the director can personify via active involvement and association with like-minded individuals and with groups both at his or her respective institution as well as with regional and national affiliations.

Through words and deeds the director and the group can impart a compelling vision (See Nanus, p. 15). Likewise, the department can, through its actions, convey the vision. The department assists with the creation of a positive vision by supporting the director and group and also by modeling camaraderie and serving as mentors. Departmental support of the director's endeavors to train and to facilitate ongoing development will validate the director's efforts and likely will predispose the staff to active involvement, as well as enhance their commitment to their role and to continuing professional development. In short, the department (as with any participant) must, to some degree, personify the vision.

Conclusion

The effectiveness and efficiency of the basic course depends, in large measure, upon a vision for the course and for the staff--a commonly shared mind-set pertaining to what the group is about and where it is going. A vision surfaces in the group's words and deeds as they continually define and redefine their purpose, direction, and goals, and as they evaluate their performance. The anatomy of a vision helps to explain its power and appeal; people participate in its creation and enact what they have created; they are a rhetorical

community within which the course director is one voice but may occupy a first-author type status. The vision and the process of visioning helps to forge group consciousness and dedication to the enterprise, reflecting the current practice/emphasis upon participative leadership (see Huey, 1994). A vision also helps to clarify tasks, enabling peak performance, and it aquaints outsiders with the group and its endeavors in a manner likely to foster appreciation.

Studies in leadership, communication and rhetoric each contribute to an understanding of vision--how it is formed and its various functions. Visions occur naturally, but certain conditions must exist for a healthy vision to emerge and operate. The leader will need engage, in part at least, a participative style of leadership and have an ability to encourage and facilitate involvement and visioning. It also will help if the leader is one whom others recognize as credible, well-intended, and capable (see Conger, p. 94). Widespread, active participation and creativity by the staff likewise is essential. In addition, the director and group will benefit from departmental support and involvement.

In part, too, the group is dependent upon the academic community. Colleagues and administrators must recognize their interdependency with those who oversee the basic course and how that scholarship can improve instruction as well as efforts to train and develop staff. If academe marginalizes education, it risks prompting students to devalue education, perceiving of a college degree as merely a hoop or hurdle--a formality prerequisite to a job. To meet accountability to students would be to again be inspired by what Ernest Boyer (1991b) has identified as the "colonial college tradition" which "emphasized the student, general education, loyalty to the campus, and the centrality of teaching" (p. 4). This mind-set might strengthen the academy's commitment to equipping those who provide the instruction and recognizing and rewarding the endeavors and scholarship of those charged with the duty.

Vision plays a central role in the basic course, helping to determine its degree of success and the support it will receive from the department and institution. A fruitful vision

enhances perceptions of the course and engenders the support necessary for the training and development of instructors and the scholarship that will assist those endeavors as well as enhance instruction. A healthy vision, coupled with superior performance, will help the basic course to become so respected and so valued that it ensures the prestige of the course within the department, on campus, and ultimately in the field, across disciplines, and in the community at large.

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